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ABSTRACT

This statement includes the Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) position on the international dimensions of education and presents a series of proposed action steps. The international dimensions of education are fourfold: (1) the capacity to communicate in languages other than English; (2) understanding of other nations, cultures, and people; (3) the capacity to compare educational systems across national boundaries; and (4) the exchange of educational practices. The recommendations are directed at the CCSSO, federal agencies, state education agencies, local education agencies, and colleges and universities. Among the recommendations are the following: the CCSSO should provide leadership in improving the quality of second language study and the teaching of international education; federal agencies should strengthen the international education capacities in the U.S. Department of Education programs through mission statements addressing cross-national studies; state education agencies should work with state boards of education to establish policy statements improving and expanding the international dimensions of education; local education agencies should support programs designed to strengthen second language study and international education; college and universities should establish second language requirements for admission. (SM)

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INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION

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Position Paper

and

Recommendations for Action

November, 1985

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The United States is truly an international society. Our people originate in every part of the world. Our lives are part of a global community -- one joined by common economic, social, cultural, and civic concerns. Education in these United States must prepare us to participate in this global community.

The members of the Council of Chief State School Officers have long held a commitment to the international dimensions of education. At this time, we believe it is important to reiterate the commitment and to present a course of action for our council, federal agencies, and the states in order to better realize that commitment. This statement includes the Council's observations and position on the international dimensions of education and presents a series of proposed action steps.

The international dimensions of education are fourfold. First is skill in communications, the capacity to communicate in languages other than English. Second, is knowledge about and understanding of nations, cultures, and people other than our own, and the worldwide issues which must be addressed -- international education. The third dimension of international education is the capacity to compare educational systems and results across national boundaries. Fourth, is the capacity to help nations learn from one another about their solutions to common educational challenges -- the exchange of educational practices.

Students must have an opportunity to learn their own culture in a global perspective. The perspective stresses the relation of human development to an appreciation of differences and similarities between cultures and the interdependence among peoples and environment.

The educational system must assure an informed citizenry aware of the political, social, and environmental issues of the world; business leadership able to communicate across cultures and within an economically interdependent marketplace; and public sector leaders learned in languages, cultures and economic-social systems who can serve the nation in world affairs.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION

1. Communication Skills

All American students should have the opportunity to learn a language other than English. The opportunity should include study in languages other than "Western" languages, and should begin in the earliest years of elementary school with continuation through the post-secondary level. Students completing secondary school should be able to demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency in communications, particularly speaking and listening, in a language other than English.

Study of a second language provides students not only with the ability to communicate effectively across nations and cultures, but also to understand other cultures through their languages, gain insight into the structure of language, and acquire skill for employment.

To assure effective language learning, teachers of second language should have first-hand experience in the cultures of the languages they teach. Exchanges of middle school and secondary school students among nations should be expanded. Students unable to experience such an exchange should have experiences through contact within their communities with exchange students, native-speaking foreign nationals and use of telecommunications.

2. International Education

International education is both the formal approach to study of the world: its history and geography, its peoples and their languages and cultures, its economic systems, its policital and social systems, and the incorporation of interdisciplinary projects throughout the curriculum relating to global issues such as the environment, energy, conflict resolution, resource allocation, and human rights.

3. Cross-National Comparisons of Educational Data

United States educational researchers and policy makers need an international dimension of information about education results for their work. Cross-national comparisons of education are necessary to understand our own and other cultures and to assess use of different educational practices. Collaborative efforts among federal agencies, states, and international education associations must be developed and strengthened to promote cooperation for high quality collection, exchange, and interpretation of comparative data.

4. Exchange of Educational Practices

Educational practitioners in the United States need to have access to information on programs, projects and individual efforts in other countries that suggest successful methods for addressing issues or problems at the local, regional or national level. International networks should be established to exchange compatible educational practices and materials that can bring new life and quality to existing school programs and provide innovative approaches to educational problems. By joint sponsorship of international conferences and exchange of strategies on topics such as youth transition from school to work, urban education, early childhood education and second language study, educators throughout the world can learn, and adapt from the best each nation has achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNCIL ACTIONS

1. Provide leadership in working with states to improve the quality of second language study and teaching of international education. In particular, the Council should identify talent and resources; arrange connections with the Department of Commerce and civic, business and professional groups; and support curriculum development, teacher training, public information, and evaluation of projects.

2. Include in The Council Assessment Center a project on international educational data collection and establish indicators in a format consistent with international projects such as The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the Economic and Social Data Base (USAID).

3. Establish regular communications with counterpart organizations in other countries and regions of the world to provide information about international education, cross-national studies and activities.

4. Establish continuing communications among the CCSSO and organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), selected USAID and World Bank programs, cross-national National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) efforts, and IEA projects. The CCSSO would identify collaborative possibilities and individual states or groups of states willing to participate in special studies or projects.

5. Establish a regular program of exchange of good practices and publications with Council counterpart organizations, especially those in Australia, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Nordic Council and Canada (based on their education organization similarities). Exchange objectives should include identification of ongoing data collection and model programs which could be adapted for the United States, as well as raising awareness in other countries of United States model programs.

6. Collaborate with the Comparative and International Education Society, the American Educational Research Association and other professional organizations to establish a roster of research specialists within each major region who could be called upon by the CCSSO, state education departments, and the media for consultation on comparative projects.

7. Work with publishers, State Education Agencies, and civic and professional educational associations to assure international issues and concerns are included in textbooks and other instructional materials.

8. Organize and solicit support for exchange programs for CCSSO members, state board members and agency administrators to establish international contacts and to access materials, personnel and data on a cross-national basis.

9. Create a national forum with professional education associations involved in international education and second language study to further program collaboration and information dissemination on a national level.

10. Discuss with the Organization of American States, the Canadian Council of Ministers of Canada and other professional education organizations the establishment of an Educational Council of the Americas to institute programs paralleling the educational programs of the Council of Europe.

11. Join with federal or international agencies to establish cooperative assessment and evaluation programs of state and local international education and second language initiatives.

12. Sponsor regular conferences on geographic regions of the world (the Americas, Europe, or the Pacific Rim) for chiefs and their staffs to examine international comparisons of educational practices, systems and data.

13. Work with colleges, universities and educational organizations to review second language entrance and graduating requirements, availability of courses in infrequently taught languages, and standards for teacher preparation and certification related to international education and second languages.

TO FEDERAL AGENCIES

1. Strengthen the international education capacities in U.S. Department of Education programs through mission statements addressing cross-national studies, inclusion of specifications for international perspectives in appropriate projects, and inclusion of cross-national data in Department publications including the Condition of Education and Digest of Educational Statistics.

2. Establish regular communication among the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies with international programs and mandates (e.g., USAID, United States Information Agency (USIA) with a particular interest in strategies to include state agencies in projects.

3. Support the continued development by the Center for Statistics (OERI) of a conceptual framework to organize existing cross-national educational research information to identify gaps, and to guide international educational data exchange.

4. Assure long-term commitment for and consistent support of U.S. participation in IEA studies. Develop research projects with other organizations and consider support for cross-national studies of classroom processes at the micro-level and of the educational systems as they relate to macro-level survey research.

5. Propose federal legislation for comprehensive assistance to international education and second language study at the elementary and secondary level. This legislation should provide incentives to:

   a. encourage states to serve as coordinators of intercultural and international activities in cooperation with various United States government and private agencies.

b. provide funding for state and local program planning, curriculum development, and special programs that include:

- o the development of evaluation and assessment systems and validated tests;
- o in-service and pre-service training of personnel in international studies and second languages;
- o state and local links with counterpart agencies in other nations;
- o community/citizen exchange programs;
- o international exchange programs for education personnel and students, including school to school exchanges;
- o establishing or expanding centers or special international high schools for the study of second languages or international studies in each state.

c. encourage the use of telecommunication, computer and video disc technologies for teaching a second language in areas where foreign language teachers are in short supply and for the less commonly taught languages.

d. encourage state and local provision for study in the less commonly taught languages of Russian, Japanese, Portuguese, Arabic, and Chinese.

6. Strengthen research programs within federally funded regional laboratories and centers to promote research and its dissemination in comparative educational data and practices, second language study and international perspectives in curriculum. Topics of research should include methods of second language study, use of learning technologies, and comparative studies of student achievement, knowledge, and attitudes.

7. Establish a National Fund for International Education to provide support for international education initiatives, including international exchange of scholars, educators and students as well as support for collaborative efforts in educational data collection and research. This Fund should receive a portion of reflow funds and encourage contributions abroad from United States firms unable to repatriate profits. U.S. tax deductions should be permitted on contributions made to the Fund abroad by their foreign subsidiaries.

8. Expand availability of other nations' media programs and broadcasts for international education and second language study using satellite and other communication technology. Multi-national efforts should include attention to copyright restrictions related to news and government operations.

TO CCSSO AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

1. Establish a consulting council on international education research to advise the U.S. Department of Education, other U.S. agencies with educational missions and the states. Consulting council issues should include the quality of assessment surveys, tests and sample design, and the purpose of cross-national comparisons related to local, state, and national policy determinations.

2. Examine ways to maintain connections with the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in education.

TO STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

1. Work with state boards of education to review or establish policy statements on improving and expanding the international dimensions of education.

2. Provide leadership in working with local education agencies (LEA's) to improve the quality of teaching and learning second languages and providing an international perspective in existing studies. These initiatives should include the following:

a. surveying existing talent and resources within the state and assessing need;

b. developing curriculum with an international perspective in geography, history, social sciences, second languages, mathematics, sciences and the arts; preparing an evaluation framework for programs; and planning for personnel training and public information;

c. encouraging addition of the less commonly taught second languages to school offerings; and

d. engaging business, civic and professional groups and other state agencies having international concerns (commerce, agriculture) in support of international education.

3. Designate an individual in the State education agency or at a college or university in the state with responsibility as a contact for cross-national comparative studies.

4. Assist LEA's with review of international issues in textbooks and other instructional materials through close working relations with publishers and civic and professional associations.

5. Encourage participation in international exchange programs by administrators, teachers and students. Expand the use of America's ethnic and linguistic minorities, foreign students, returned Peace Corps volunteers, and other Americans having extensive experience abroad in second language teaching and international education.

6. Provide a focus on international education and study of second languages through state assessment and data collection systems. Establish teacher certification and accreditation procedures so that second language teachers demonstrate a high level of language proficiency and teaching ability, as well as a knowledge of the people, history and institutions of the nation(s) or region in which the language is spoken.

7. Require LEA's to provide the opportunity for all students to study a second language, introducing these opportunities at the elementary school level where possible.

8. Establish expectations and proficiency in second languages for students completing high school.

9. Collaborate with universities and colleges to include international perspectives in teacher training programs and summer institutes, encourage international exchanges and develop ways of linking elementary, secondary and postsecondary partnership projects with IEA, USAID and related organizations.

10. Establish regular school year and/or summer programs for students focusing on second languages or international issues in business, economics, environment, and government.

11. Coordinate and encourage exchange of youth, teachers and administrators and involvement by LEA's in the exchange of information with schools in other nations to expand perspectives at the school and school district levels on similarities and differences in education among nations.

12. Work with various levels of the education system (elementary, secondary, college, technical instruction and university) to integrate instruction so that international education and second language study is well-connected among levels and each student's learning is continuous.

13. Establish procedures for granting of academic credit for study abroad, experience at accredited institutions and create enlarged opportunities for required testing in overseas locations.

TO LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

1. Adopt policies and support programs designed to strengthen second language study and international education. Review tests and assessment programs to ensure that international dimensions are adequately considered.

2. Establish with existing courses of study at the elementary and secondary level (geography, history, social sciences, second languages, mathematics, science, and the arts) a worldwide perspective to assure students an international and cross-cultural exposure.

3. Provide teachers and other professionals opportunities to participate in exchange and in-service programs that improve their competence in second languages.

4. Provide every student with opportunity to begin the study of a second language in the earliest years of formal education and to continue study of the language until a functional proficiency has been achieved. Local school districts are encouraged to identify students with high aptitude for language study and provide opportunity for these students to pursue advanced study, in regular or special schools, such as "international high schools" and to have opportunities to live and study in other nations. Local education agencies are encouraged to offer uncommonly taught languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian).

TO STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES

1. Urge colleges and universities to establish (or reinstate) second language requirements for admission to and graduation from appropriate postsecondary programs. The requirements should include demonstrated proficiency in speaking, understanding, reading and writing the language, not solely the earning of credit hours of second language study. Institutions can be guided in setting levels of proficiency by national standards being developed by language specialists.

2. Include as part of preparation for teaching a second language study in a nation or area where that language is primary. State education agencies, colleges and universities should collaborate in establishing requirements for this study as part of teacher preparation and certification, and to expand the capacity of institutions to prepare teachers of the less commonly taught languages of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian.

3. Allow students to utilize financial resources/scholarships for overseas study opportunities for a limited period.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents an extensive set of recommendations for action on the international dimensions of education. The recommendations are directed toward different levels of government and institutions or organizations. Because there are multiple authorities which must act together to meet overall objectives, the Council of Chief State School Officers here presents both actions to which it is committed and actions which the member states and other institutions should take in partnership that will stimulate change. Virtually every part of education today has or should have an international dimension. We must assure that dimension is presented effectively throughout American education as we prepare students for the 21st Century.

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